

REGISTRY  
FILE OFM

27 February 1969

Dear Mr. Bannerman,

I indicated in my letter of resignation that I would submit a separate memorandum containing comments on areas in which I feel the Agency might improve its performance. I submit these comments separately because I don't feel that they merit the broader distribution of my letter of resignation, and because they are not relevant to my leaving the Agency. As I stated in my letter of resignation, "these observations represent matters for which I would have offered constructive criticism and recommended alternatives had I remained with the Agency." They are submitted as indicators of possible areas for productive research.

These are strictly personal observations. I claim no particular professional competence in any of the areas on which I have commented. The only unique value that these observations might have is that they are to a degree comparative observations, based on my exposure to the policies and practices of other institutions during my year at Cornell and subsequent contacts.

The following comments have a common central theme: They are indicative of a lack of responsiveness to change on the part of the Agency. In this respect, the Agency does not differ from any other institution. The same charge is being pressed with equal force against our schools, our churches, our local, state and federal governments, and our National Football League champion. But, the task of the Agency in counteracting unresponsiveness to change is complicated by the Agency's necessary insulation from normal relationships with other institutions. The Agency is not exposed to the degree other institutions are to the domestic winds of change. To compensate for the detrimental effects of its insularity, the Agency must make extraordinary efforts to open and maintain channels of communications with the "outside". The following comments are offered in the spirit of contributing to these efforts.

1. The Agency's grade structure is no longer comparable in all respects with those of other federal agencies.  
This comment is necessarily stated very generally.

I don't know the full dimensions of the problem. On the basis of the last year's experiences, I would hazard the guess that in general management grade levels we are as much as two grades behind some of the newer agencies such as NASA and HUD, and up to one grade behind the "old line" agencies.

I will relate only two of a number of experiences which have led me to the conclusion that we are relatively undergraded. I was one of nine National Institute of Public Affairs Fellows at Cornell University. We were a highly homogeneous group in terms of levels of academic and professional experience, comparative degrees of specialization and lengths of service. At the outset, there were three GS-14's, three GS-13's and three GS-12's (including myself). There are now a fairly even distribution of GS-15's, GS-14's and GS-13's, and one GS-12: myself.

In exploring employment possibilities in the "poverty programs," I contacted a number of federal agencies, including HEW, HUD and OEO. I was a newcomer to the matter of constructing a marketable personal history statement, and had the additional complication of observing security precautions. In preparing a resume, I neglected to include desired grade and simply inserted "GS-13" as an afterthought at the suggestion of a friend who reviewed the finished product.

I found during follow-up interviews initiated by the various agencies in response to my inquiries that I was invariably initially considered for GS-14 positions. This would indicate that my credentials, as generally but accurately set forth in my resume, were apparently judged sufficient to support consideration for GS-14 positions.

I got a standard reaction when I revealed that GS-13 was not my current grade, but rather my desired grade: I was "undergraded". On a number of occasions I was informed that this condition was not considered uncommon in applicants from the Agency.

Mr. Bannerman, I do not recount these incidents in a spirit of recrimination. I would be dishonest to claim that I am satisfied with my present grade. At the same time, I feel that my career prospects with the Agency were probably superior to those I am likely to encounter elsewhere.

In short, I am leaving for the reason given in my letter of resignation and for that reason only. I relate these incidents only because I feel they reflect a deficiency which is damaging to the Agency's objective of securing and retaining personnel of the highest quality.

If the assumption that we are undergraded at management levels compared to other agencies has any basis in fact, it would be logical to further assume that "the hump" is not our major obstacle in achieving a more rapid promotion rate. In other words, promotion is not postponed because of a glut at the peaks of our career service pyramids, but because the pyramids are too narrow and their bases too low. The Bureau of the Budget and (I'm told) other federal agencies were recruiting graduating Masters of Public Administration at the GS-12 level at Cornell. If this is true, these agencies' management grade structures would necessarily be broader at higher levels in order to accommodate the higher base at which their junior managers start.

But, undergradedness is not the only factor which may restrain and perhaps even distort the dimensions of our career service pyramids. The next comment describes a factor which is at least equally relevant and calls for more complicated adjustments in restructuring our career services along contemporary lines.

2. The career services as presently constituted are not fully relevant to the Agency's current and prospective organizational and environmental needs. The career service boundaries were drawn up to serve the needs

of an earlier organization which itself was structured to accommodate earlier operating conditions. It would be incredible if the career services did not now need some adjustment in view of changed and changing organizational and operating conditions.

The primary environmental change has been the introduction of automatic data processing. It is difficult even at this point in time to assess the impact of ADP on career development programs. But, it does seem reasonable to expect a considerably reduced emphasis on what has always been a major function of middle management: The "massaging" of information.

It also seems reasonable to expect a greatly increased requirement for managers who are generally familiar with the nature of ADP and its applicability to their activities. This familiarity does not necessarily involve a knowledge of bits and bytes and nanoseconds, or the relative merits of COBOL as opposed to FORTRAN. It is more directly related to a capability for systematic analysis: A skill for identifying operational requirements, for articulating them as system needs, and for evaluating the responsiveness of computer products to the operational requirements.

This is to some extent a general management requirement, i.e., all future managers should have sufficient exposure to ADP to be able to appreciate its powers and limitations and relevance to their activities. But, it also may well represent a need for a new career service--not to speak of reorganization--to provide a continuing source of information specialists who are also versed in functional areas. The DD/S has taken the first steps in this direction; to my knowledge, the DD/P has yet to begin.

The environmental change--the introduction of ADP--has had repercussions in the organizational area which is simultaneously undergoing its own evolution. This evolution is twofold: The deletion of some functions as superfluous and the demotion of functions which were previously managerial due to routinization; the emergence

of new functions and the assumption of recognized functions for which resources were not previously available.

This evolution is translatable into changed position requirements and changed skill requirements. I will here mention only a few of the major aspects of this evolution and a few of the more obvious changes in personnel.

a. Planning

Planning as an integrated and institution-wide management function has become a predictable reality with the advent of ADP, which can produce the comprehensive, accurate and current information base necessary for realistic projection. Planning positions and planning skills are needed at the operating level to assure that the operating perspective is adequately represented in the total planning effort.

b. Coordination

Concurrent with the emergence of ADP, which carries its own centralization thrust in the information sphere, there has been a growing move toward centralization. This move has been an incremental effort: A little here, a little there, now slow, now rapid. As such, its cumulative impact cannot be readily assessed. But, one of its effects is to blur organizational and career lines both vertically and horizontally. Functions which were considered exclusively logistical are gradually recognized to be primarily financial. Functions which were once managerial are reduced to routine processing status. Once neat areas of responsibility and authority fall into disarray, creating conflict but, more importantly, creating opportunity for omission. It is difficult to be specific here, but I would hazard the guess

that we are relatively overmanaging some routine support functions and undermanaging the support aspects of some project activities in terms of their respective dollar values.

Precisely what this means for career service lines is difficult to determine. We appear to have an operational mix of overlapping and underlapping in terms of career services' correspondence to organizational requirements. I would suggest that perhaps more interchangeability among career services is called for, probably along the lines of characteristics common to all of the career services: ADP, planning, management, legal, etc., roles and skills.

This has been general to the point of vagueness. I will cite one example to try to bring it in focus: The CT Area Familiarization and Language Study Program in which career trainees are assigned to foreign locations, generally in a student status, for one or more years to acquire the language and a familiarity with the area of assignment. To the best of my knowledge, this newly-initiated program is under the primary and almost exclusive control of the concerned area divisions. If there is in fact a lack of centralized development of requirements, it would seem safe to predict that we will end up with a superabundance of world language capabilities (acquired both in the mother countries and in their former colonies). In addition, the program evaluation and revision will be only as good as the area divisions' existing capabilities are competent of making them.

We seem to be confronted here with a problem of undermanagement due to an overlapping of jurisdictions: The geographic and operational responsibilities of an area division vs. the training responsibilities of the Office of Training. The

solution would appear to be the establishment of a central unit which, regardless of organizational location, would provide the professional and integrated planning, direction and review needed for a DD/P-wide program of uniformly high quality. To man such a unit, personnel cross-bred in language training and in operational matters would be desirable. This is not to say that there are not such personnel in the Agency, but it is to say that their existence is happenstance and that the career service structure is not now geared to develop them.

The first observation addressed itself to "headroom". The second observation addresses itself to "shoulder-room". The need to present junior officers with more challenging assignments is frequently expressed. Expanding their horizons by incorporating into their positions separate but related functions such as planning, ADP, coordination, etc., will provide them with greater job satisfaction through a greater breadth of responsibilities and will benefit the Agency by creating potential executives with a greater breadth of experience. The final observation will further extend the "shoulder-room" concept.

3. The Agency should emphasize establishment of expanded channels of communications with the outside. This observation goes back to the assertion at the outset that the Agency, for valid security reasons, is insulated from normal relationships with other institutions, and must in consequence make special provisions to assure the continued input necessary for change and growth. I would see these special provisions to be:
  - a. Commitment of greater resources to training, primarily external but also internal.
  - b. Participation in federal executive exchange programs.

The need for greater concentration on training is probably self-evident. The creation of new knowledge and the obsolescence of old knowledge are not only continuing but probably accelerating. I doubt that adoption of the

academic sabbatical would any longer suffice for purposes of keeping abreast in many fields. A rule of thumb allocating 20% of total career time to training might be more realistic.

I will not elaborate on the values of external training here. I wrote a couple of papers on this subject for the Registrar; they should be on file there. I will only reiterate my conviction that some provision should be made for continued "non-establishment" training which will expose trainees to alternatives to current policies and procedures. (The National Institute of Public Affairs Program formerly provided the opportunity for such exposure; it will offer the opportunity to a lesser degree now that the Program is coming under the aegis of the Civil Service Commission.)

Finally, consideration might be given to Agency participation in the federal executive exchange program conducted by the Civil Service Commission. There would be some clearance problems, but they should not prove insuperable. The value to the Agency would be incalculable: an established procedure for introducing new and different policies and procedures at a level where they could be assured of the opportunity for testing.

I hope that these observations might be of some service to you. As I stated at the outset, they are no more than indicators of possible areas for productive research. Some of the critical comments may have been overstated, others understated. But, they are all offered in a spirit of appreciation for the many benefits I have received from my association with the Agency.

I wish you and all of our associates continued success in the accomplishment of the Agency's mission.

Sincerely yours,

